

A KISS IN THE DARK.

A FARCE, IN ONE ACT.

BY JOHN BALDWIN BUCKSTONE.

First performed at the Theatre Royal, Haymarket, June 13th, 1840.



Dramatis Personæ.

[See page 7.]

MR. SELIM PETTIBONE	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	Mr. Buckstone.
FRANK FATHOM	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	Mr. J. Webster.
MRS. PETTIBONE	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	Mrs. Clifford.
MARY	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	Miss Matley.
UNKNOWN FEMALE	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	Miss Partridge.

TIME IN REPRESENTATION.—Forty Minutes.

THE UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK LIBRARY

PETTIBOND
gloves.

FRANK.—T
MRS. PETT
MARY.—Co
UNKNOWN

boots; hat and

*The Gift of
Mrs. C. F. Hall*

STAGE DIRECTIONS.

EXITS AND ENTRANCES.—R. means Right; L. Left; D. F. Door in Flat; R. D. Right Door; L. D. Left Door; S. E. Second Entrance; U. E. Upper Entrance; M. D. Middle Door; L. U. E. Left Upper Entrance; R. U. E. Right Upper Entrance; L. S. E. Left Second Entrance; P. S. Prompt Side; O. P. Opposite Prompt.

RELATIVE POSITIONS.—R. means Right; L. Left; C. Centre; R. C. Right of Centre; L. C. Left of Centre.

R.

RC.

C.

LC.

L.

❖❖ The Reader is supposed to be on the Stage, facing the *audience*.



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A KISS IN THE DARK.

SCENE I.—*An Apartment in the Villa of Mr. Pettibone at Clapham. Entrance at back, leading to garden. In the flat, L. H., are the windows of a conservatory. Doors, R. and L. Table and chairs, sofa, table, R., with writing materials and ink-stand.*

MRS. PETTIBONE *discovered at table, R., writing.*

Mrs. P. I must complete the inventory of my present collection of curiosities this evening, as I shall gain such an addition to my museum on the arrival of my husband's friend, Mr. Fathom, that I shall be unable to recollect all the names and uses of my little wonders unless they are carefully written down. (*Writes.*) "No. 22: A bit of the blarney used at Cork. 23: The ashes of the first pipe of tobacco smoked in England. 24: Is——" (*Gate bell rings without, L.*) A ring at the gate bell! Can't be he. Seven o'clock is the precise moment for Mr. P. Perhaps it is Mr. Fathom.

Enter MARY, L.

Mary. The gentleman, ma'am, that you've been expecting from foreign parts; he has just drove up to the gate, and is putting such a quantity of queer things into the hall.

Mrs. P. My presents, no doubt. I thought he'd be here to-night. Pray ask him in. (*Exit Mary, L.*) I shall now be completely set up with all sorts of Indian articles, tomahawks, and scalps, and war-clubs, and everything wonderful!

Enter FRANK FATHOM, L., in a travelling dress, cloak, cap, &c.

Frank. Oh, my dear madam, rejoiced to see you! (*Puts cap, &c., on sofa, L.*)

Mrs. P. How do you do? Lord, how brown you are; and how travelling alters people! You look so improved, so expanded, I may say. (*Gets over to L.*) Pray sit down. (*Places his chair, R.*) Pettibone will be so glad you are come; he has been talking of you, and looking for the arrival of packets every day. (*Seats herself, L.*) And are you quite well?

Frank. Quite well, ma'am; rather fatigued. Just arrived from Bristol.

Mrs. P. And you've been travelling in America, and have come home in the Great Western? What a deal you must have seen! How Pettibone will devour your narratives!

Frank. He must have a good digestion, then; for the wonders I have met with have been astounding. Oh, Mrs. P., think of log-huts, water-

falls, mosquitoes, canvas-back ducks, corduroy roads, niggers, canals, swamps, dollars, and mint juleps!

Mrs. P. Dear me!

Frank. I've matter enough to keep you and Pettibone wide awake every night for the next six weeks.

Mrs. P. And my promised curiosities?

Frank. They are in the hall. A beautiful buffalo skin; a pipe of peace for you to smoke; when you've tilt with Pettibone, and want to make it up, you must take a puff at it; there's a pair of snow-shoes and a scalping-knife; I'll show you how the Indians take off the scalp when Pettibone comes home.

Mrs. P. How charming!

Frank. You've a smart little place here, I see. You were just married, and moving into it, when I left England. A small conservatory, too, eh? Garden before and behind; snug distance from the road; and everything comfortable.

(*Rises, looks about up stage, and comes down, L.*)

Mrs. P. We are very comfortable indeed. Pettibone never stays out, comes home regularly from the City at seven o'clock; then we tea, and talk, and play double-dummy; sometimes he sings pretty love songs, and says he's never so happy as when his boots are off, his slippers on, and he is taking his repose on the sofa.

Frank. What a sweet picture of domestic comfort! And P. makes a good husband, does he?

Mrs. P. Excellent.

Frank. What a gay little man he was when I first met him at the Lord Mayor's ball! What a favourite, too, with the ladies!

Mrs. P. Oh, he's left all that off now—quite changed! Bless you, he continually tells me, that, on his honour, he don't think there's such another woman in the world as I am. Hark!

(*Clock strikes seven.*)

Frank. At what?

Mrs. P. The clock striking seven. He won't be long now; he's never more than three or four minutes over. (*Gate bell rings, L.*) There, he's punctual to a minute.

Pettibone sings, L.

"I love her—how I love her!"

Frank. And singing, too, like a nightingale.

Enter PETTIBONE, L.

Pet. Ah, my boy, how d'ye do? I thought you had arrived, by the queer things I saw in the hall

COSTUME.

PETTIBONE.—Green Newmarket coat; white vest; nankeen trousers; boots; hat and gloves.

FRANK.—Travelling cloak; dark surtout; white trousers; boots.

MRS. PETTIBONE.—White muslin dress.

MARY.—Cotton dress and cap.

UNKNOWN FEMALE.—Silk dress; shawl; bonnet and veil.

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—so glad to see you. Betsy, give me a kiss. (*Crossing to c.*) Don't laugh at me; I never go out and never come in without going through this little ceremony. Mind you always do the same when you get a wife, my boy; it keeps up the little cuddlybilities of domestic bliss, eh? Prevents the water in the tea urn of matrimony ever getting quite cold—keeps it always a little on the simmer, eh?

Frank. And often saves you from getting into hot water, eh?

Pet. That's good, by jingo! Give me your hand. You hav'n't brought home a wife amongst your curiosities, have you?

Frank. Oh, no, no! (*Aside.*) Because I left one behind me.

Pet. Time enough for that, eh? And now, Betsy—bootjack! (*Mrs. Pettibone crosses, L.*) Ah, stop, I must show Frank my dahlias before it's quite dark, and take him round the garden—such a nice garden! You should see me and Betsy at seven o'clock in the morning—I'm in my morning gown, and Betsy in something with a frill round it—catching snails. Betsy catches snails beautifully, and throws 'em over the wall into the next garden. Then we weed and rake—much better than our Mansion House ball raking. What rum times they were, eh? Lord, I wonder what's become of Miss Dumbleby?

Mrs. P. Selim, dear, no allusions to old flames; I don't like it.

Pet. (*Aside to Frank.*) You see what a happy fellow I am. Quite right, Betsy, dear—quite right. When we light up the torch of Hymen, we should always extinguish our old links, eh? Ha, ha, ha! To be sure!

Mrs. P. I'll just step into the hall, and look at my presents. There are snow-shoes and a scalping-knife, dear. Mr. Fathom is going to show me how the scalp is taken off. You'll lend him your head to exemplify, won't you, dear?

Pet. Oh, I dare say!

Mrs. P. To please me, won't you, dear?

Pet. Yes, dear. (*Exit Mrs. Pettibone, L.*) My boy, that's a dear creature! Such a temper, no frowning, no shying plates—oh, no, none of that here!—and such high notions—devilish high. I sometimes think she ought to be a queen of some place or other, instead of the wife of a little anxious stockbroker.

Frank. She's a fine woman.

Pet. Now isn't she?

Frank. And you ought to be—no doubt you are—a happy fellow!

Pet. Yes.

Frank. Completely happy?

Pet. Why—no—um—as to the word completely, in its dictionary sense, I don't think I can altogether use it in my case.

Frank. Indeed?

Pet. It's all my own fault; I can't help tormenting myself.

Frank. With what?

Pet. The metaphysics of matrimony.

Frank. What do you mean by metaphysics?

Pet. I mean by metaphysics what I can't explain, and you can't understand—human nature, and inconsistency, and all that. Frank, you and I are old friends. Look at me. Am I handsome?

Frank. Certainly not.

Pet. Six feet high?

Frank. Quite the reverse.

Pet. Have I anything engaging in my manner?

Frank. Not that I can perceive.

Pet. Oh, you are right! I asked a plain question, and I've got a very plain answer. Now, what could a fine, handsome, intellectual, queen-like woman as Mrs. P. is, see in me to marry me, eh? Now think of the metaphysics of matrimony, and imagine what my thoughts must be, when I lay awake on my pillow at two o'clock in the morning sometimes.

Frank. You don't mean to say you are jealous of her?

Pet. No; though to be sure I am in the City all day, and she is here alone all day.

Frank. Very true!

Pet. Ah, now you begin to enter into my feelings. A thought has struck me. You, my boy, were an old bean of my wife's, only I cut you out. How I should like—Lord, how I should like—

(*Pettibone is speaking in an undertone.*)

Mrs. Pettibone is re-entering, L., stops on seeing them, and listens.)

Frank. What?

Pet. To put my Betsy to the test, and see how she would behave to a man that would dare to make love to her. Will you try?

Frank. I?

Pet. You! Make yourself agreeable to her, touch upon your early feelings, pity her being alone all day, talk of your travels, sigh, ask her if she is really happy, eh? What do you think? I'm sure she'd knock you down; but you wouldn't mind that to serve me.

Frank. Rather a dangerous position to place me in!

Pet. I'll give you every opportunity, upon my life, I will. Do, it will make me so happy. You're a good looking fellow, you know—a fine, dashing manner with you. Try, do—do.

Frank. If it will serve to make your happiness complete—

Pet. It would now—it would.

Frank. I'll do my best.

Pet. There's a good fellow. (*Mrs. Pettibone withdraws, threatening Pettibone.*) We shall have such a laugh when it's over.

Frank. Perhaps not!

Pet. Eh?

Frank. Perhaps she might encourage me.

Pet. Oh, no, no; she wouldn't! Oh, don't mention it! I should explode, die of self-combustion. But she won't! No, no; you'll have such a box on the ears, a stinger. I know you will.

Mrs. Pettibone. (*Without.*) Be careful of them, Mary.

Pet. There she is! I'll give you half an hour at once, while supper is getting ready.

Enter MRS. PETTIBONE, L.

Mrs. P. Well, my dear Mr. Fathom, I'm delighted with my presents, with the war-club especially. Take care, P., that you never offend me; I could fell you to the ground with the slightest tap. Your kind thought of me, Mr. Fathom, while you were far away, has really affected me.

Pet. Dear fellow, isn't he, Betsy?

Mrs. P. Indeed he is. It is such thought, such attention, that has such influence over our sex.

Frank. I hope, dear madam, that your wishes will often occupy my thoughts, and command my attention.

Pet. (Aside to Frank.) Ah, that's it! Something in that way, be delicate though.

Frank. It makes me so happy, placed as we were in early life, to see you thus surrounded by every comfort; yet when I sometimes think of my disappointment, I—I— Ah, well I won't talk about it. (*Aside to Pettibone.*) Is that what you mean?

Pet. Yes, yes; only put in a little more ardour! Go it.

Mrs. P. (Sighing.) Ah, my dear sir, memory has its regrets as well as pleasures!

Pet. (Aside.) What? Eh? What does she mean by that observation and that sigh? Surely she ain't sorry she's Mrs. P. Oh, good heavens, if she was—

Mrs. P. I hope you are going to make a long stay. P. has had a room fitted up purposely for you.

(*Frank and Mrs. Pettibone go up and change sides.*)

Pet. Only calls one P. The first time she ever uttered that letter without the word dear. She is certainly looking at him very oddly, or it may be only my fancy—it is, it must. Betsy—Betsy, dear—(*crosses to C.*)—I'm going to the nursery.

Frank. What a family man!

Pet. No; the nursery garden where the bulbs are, not the nursery where the babbies are. I've ordered some—some plants. I sha'n't stay long.

Mrs. P. Oh, pray don't hurry yourself; I have company now, you know! When I'm alone I'm always anxious for your return; but when one has a friend here, and such an old friend too as Mr. Fathom, the little half hours slip by in a minute.

Pet. Oh, her little half hours slip by in a minute! Ah, ha, ha! Of course, of course. (*Aside to Frank.*) You needn't go very far. Just touch upon the topic, that's all. She'll resent it, I know; but—but—

Frank. I'm to put her to the test, at all events.

Pet. Oh, certainly; but don't be too savage, that's all! You understand?

Mrs. P. (Aside.) I'm to be put to the test, am I? Very well, sir. Are you not going, my dear?

Pet. Oh, she calls me dear at last; but sometimes loving expressions are used the more to deceive. Yes, Betsy; I'm going—shall be absent about half an hour, not longer. (*Going.*) Good-bye! (*Aside.*) I wish I could see—be an eye witness—how she'd act. I will. I have it. Good-bye! (*Going.*) Oh, my kiss!

[*Puts on his hat, and hurries off, L., after kissing Mrs. Pettibone.*]

Frank. Good creature that, but very odd; though he seems affectionate, and certainly is fond of you.

Mrs. P. Yes; I've very few complaints to make. He's pretty well as husbands go.

Frank. (Seated.) Now for my task. Well, Elizabeth, how familiar it sounds to call you by that name, and what a variety of recollections it brings to one's mind.

Mrs. P. Ah, when I received your first letter!

(*Pettibone appears in conservatory at back, watching them.*)

Frank. Didn't I write it in a beautiful hand? And how I trembled when I had fairly given sixpence to a boy to deliver it.

(*They are seated at some distance, but advance closer to each other. Pettibone watching.*)

Mrs. P. And though I didn't reply to it, there was a sincerity in its tone that always pleased me.

Frank. (Aside.) Upon my word she seems really to speak with regret. Well, I must proceed, at any rate. (*They draw their chairs nearer. Pettibone agonized.*) How was it I made so little impression on you—how was it that Pettibone became the happy man? You can tell me now.

Mrs. P. You flirted so.

Frank. Did I?

Mrs. P. And seemed to be taken with every fresh face you met.

Frank. Consider what was my age—nineteen. We are all coxcombs at that age, and perhaps—perhaps—(*they draw their chairs closer. Pettibone clasps his hands in despair*)—your apparent coldness made me affect to admire another merely to provoke you, and let you see I was not breaking my heart, and—and— (*Takes her hand.*) Well, I wish you every happiness.

(*He kisses her hand. Pettibone smashes a pane of glass, and disappears. Frank and Mrs. Pettibone start up.*)

Mrs. P. What's that?

Frank. A pane of glass broken.

Mrs. P. It is those tiresome children in the next village, always throwing stones. (*Loud ringing of a bell.*) There's P. come back; how vexed he will be!

Enter PETTIBONE, L., affecting to sing.

Pet. Tol lol de lol, &c. I'm come back—(*sings*)—I'm come back! What's the matter, Betsy? You seem confused.

Mrs. P. I've been startled.

Pet. Indeed!

Mrs. P. While talking with our friend, someone threw a stone through one of the panes of the conservatory.

Pet. Oh, was that all? Never mind, Betsy!

Mrs. P. Yes, dear.

Pet. Bring me a carving-knife—I mean a corkscrew. When I say a carving-knife, I always mean a corkscrew—I want to open some hock. It's in your room. Don't stand staring at me, as if you didn't know what I meant. Do as I bid you!

Mrs. P. Well, I'm sure!

(*Flounces into room, R.*)

Pet. (Eagerly to Frank.) Well, have you said anything—made any advances?

Frank. (Aside.) I can never tell him how they were received; I'm quite astonished!

Pet. Why don't you answer me?

Frank. You were gone such a short time.

Pet. (Aside.) Quite long enough—quite long enough.

Frank. I spoke of my early attachment.

Pet. Well?

Frank. She—

Pet. Yes.

Frank. Stared vacantly at me, and said—

Pet. (Very eagerly.) What?

Frank. Nothing.

Pet. Oh!

Frank. Then I asked her how she came to prefer you—

Pet. What did she say?

Frank. Said that I was too fickle for her.

Pet. And what did she do then?

Frank. Nothing.

Pet. (Aside.) That's a lie! Did you get close to her?

Frank. Yes.

Pet. And did she get close to you?

Frank. (*Hesitating.*) No.

Pet. (*Aside.*) Another lie! He's deceiving me; but I'll keep my feelings down. And—and did you take her hand?

Frank. Yes.

Pet. And did she snatch it away again?

Frank. Yes.

Pet. (*Aside.*) Another lie—a diabolical lie. And told you she'd tell me? I knew she would, I was convinced she would. Ha, ha, ha! Now I'm happy. What a miserable devil I am! Oh, what villainy—(*aside*)—what treachery! Well, I watch'd 'em. I shall now know how to act.

Frank. (*Aside.*) Mrs. P.'s conduct is very strange, I can't tell him the truth, 'tis impossible. Well, it's his own fault, not mine. Excuse me for a moment, I'm going to bring in my presents, and see my box placed in my room. Don't trouble yourself, the servants will show me. Poor P., I pity him.

[*Exit, L.*]

Pet. He's confused; he hurries from my presence. No wonder. Oh, what falsehoods I've been told! She stare at him vacantly; she snatch her hand away, when I with my own eyes saw him kiss it. This accounts for his presents, his sculpting-knives and tomahawks. I may use 'em in a way they won't like.

Enter MARY, L., with tablecloth.

Pet. Mary.

Mary. Yes, sir.

Pet. I'm in the City all day.

Mary. Yes, sir.

Pet. How does your mistress pass her time?

Mary. Sometimes one way, sometimes another.

Pet. Explain.

Mary. Works a bit, and scolds a bit, and sits at the bedroom window a bit.

Pet. (*Aside.*) Of course, to be admired, to be nodded at by the young fellows passing the house on the tops of the omnibusses. When the fellows see a fine woman sitting at her bedroom window working, they a'ways nod to them, and kiss their hands to them. I know their tricks, I've done it myself. Bring candles.

Mary. Yes, sir. (*Aside.*) What's the matter with him to-night?

[*Exit.*]

Enter MRS. PETTIBONE, R. D., with a penknife and pen.

Mrs. P. P., dear.

Pet. Yes, dear.

Mrs. P. (*Going to writing-table.*) I wish you'd mend me some pens before you go to town in the morning.

Pet. I will. (*Aside.*) Going to write to him, no doubt; and I'm to mend the pens. I'll split 'em all up. Betsy.

Mrs. P. Yes, dear.

Pet. Nice fellow, Fathom, isn't he?

Mrs. P. Tolerable.

Pet. Don't you think him very handsome?

Mrs. P. So, so.

Pet. Ain't you sorry you didn't have him?

Mrs. P. What an idea!

(*Goes to table and writes.*)

Pet. Affects to be indifferent. Oh, what horrid duplicity! Now she's writing a note to him. I

don't care. Tol de lol lol, &c. I don't care. Tol de lol lol, &c.

(*While singing he gets near her, she draws blotting paper over her writing.*)

Mrs. P. Now you know I never like to be looked at while writing.

Pet. Makes you nervous, I suppose?

Mrs. P. Yes.

Pet. And then you can't spell your words correctly.

MARY enters, L., with two candles and snuffers, she places them on table. FATHOM enters, L. Mary exits, L. Mrs. Pettibone has folded note.

Pet. It is a note she has been writing; now who can it be for? Well, Frank, seen your room; comfortable, isn't it?

Frank. Very, indeed.

Pet. You shall have supper directly. Chops! D'ye like chops? (*Fiercely.*)

Frank. Very much, indeed.

Pet. I should choke, if I were to try to eat.

(*Mrs. Pettibone is seated R. of table, Mr. Pettibone in c., Frank, L. Pettibone alternately watches them, till he detects Mrs. Pettibone holding up the note, intimating to Frank that it is for him.*)

Pet. That note is for him. (*Starting up.*) An assignation—of course it is. Never mind, I'll find them out. I'm going out again, only for a few minutes. Supper won't be ready just yet. I may be five minutes, perhaps ten.

Mrs. P. Don't be very long, dear.

Pet. No, dear.

[*Exit, L.*]

Frank. Is he often so restless?

Mrs. P. Oh, dear, no! The fact is— Come near me.

(*They draw their chairs close. PETTIBONE darts in. They retreat, apparently confused.*)

Pet. Oh, I was going without my hat, that's all. (*Aside.*) I nearly caught them. (*Looks at them suspiciously.*) Now I'm off.

[*Takes his hat, and exits, L.*]

Mrs. P. (*Giving note.*) Peruse this at your earliest opportunity.

PETTIBONE again darts in just in time to see Mrs. Pettibone give Frank the note.

Pet. The note was for him, sure enough. Very well; go on. There'll be murder presently.

Mrs. P. Back again, dear?

Pet. Yes; I forgot—I felt—I thought— Lord, I've got it in my hand!

[*Exit, L.*]

Frank. (*Reading note.*) "Continue your attentions." Certainly, as you request it.

(*Draws close to her. PETTIBONE again darts in. They retreat as before.*)

Pet. Sha'n't go out at all—I tell you I sha'n't go out at all. To-morrow will do. (*Sits in centre.*) You've done as I bid you, I see, eh? Ha, ha, ha! (*Aside.*) I think the last time I left the room he kissed her. I could almost swear I heard the squeak of a little kiss. Oh, if I could be convinced I'll conceal my feelings till I'm quite satisfied—quite sure, and then— Betsy, dear, if that note

you were writing just now is for anyone in the City, I'll leave it for you.

Mrs. P. No, no, thank you; it is not worth the trouble, and you wouldn't be so mean as to defraud the revenue of a penny.

Pet. How they look at each other. I've a great mind to jump up and tell 'em both how they've deceived me. No, I won't. I'll set a trap for them. Show 'em what they are. Ah, a good thought! I have it.

Mrs. P. Selim, what's the matter with you this evening?

Pet. Nothing. I've been vexed. City business. I think, as I have a moment to spare, I'll drop a note to the wine merchant about the empty bottles. *(Takes inkstand to L table.)* He ought to fetch 'em away, or I shall be charged for 'em. What horrid candles. *(Snuffs one out.)* Why did I go to the expense of a handsome lamp, when you will burn candles?

(In trying to light it, he purposely extinguishes the other. Stage dark.)

Mrs. P. P., dear, how clumsy you are.

Pet. Sit still. I'll get a light. Mary's cooking. I'll get a light.

(He pours some ink on his pocket-handkerchief, and, in passing Mrs. Pettibone, contrives to leave a large patch on her nose.)

Mrs. P. P., what are you doing?

Pet. Nothing, dear—nothing. Sit still. I'll fetch a light.

(Exit, P.)

Frank. Is it really your wish that I should continue my attentions? *(Getting close to her.)* 'Gad, she's a fine woman, and I never in my life could be in the dark with one without giving her a kiss, and, encouraged as I am, who could resist?

(Attempts to kiss her.)

Mrs. P. Don't—don't. I won't allow it. How can you be so foolish? *(Kisses her, and blacks his nose.)* Go away, here's P.

(Lights up. Frank returns to his chair as PETTIBONE enters, L., stands between them moonstruck at seeing Frank's face; he trembles, places one candle on the table, and seizes Mrs. Pettibone's arm.)

Pet. Woman, look at that man—look at his nose! Now go to your room—to the glass, and look at your own! Come, madam—come.

(He drags her off, R. D.)

Frank. Very strange conduct. However, my poor friend is severely punished for the pains he has taken to test his wife's constancy. What am I to do? I can never truly tell him how my advances have been received. He's mad.

Enter MARY, L.

Mary. You're wanted, sir.

Frank. *(With his back to Mary.)* Who is it?

Mary. A postboy wishes to see you, sir.

Frank. I'll speak to him at once. *(Turns. Mary laughs at him.)* What are you laughing at?

Mary. Your nose, sir! It's all over ink. Ha, ha, ha!

Frank. Then I'll make it marking ink. *(Kisses her, and blacks her face. She exits indignantly.)* Egad, the girl's right! How—how could this happen? And Mrs. P.'s face, too! Now I understand P.'s rage, and he must know all. Poor P.!

Let me see the postboy, and then to confirm my poor friend's misery.

(Exit, L. D.)

Enter PETTIBONE, R. D.

Pet. Now, sir, I'm for you. He's gone—gone to elude my vengeance. As for Mrs. P., I never could have believed her so hardened. Don't shed a tear. Won't speak a word. I want to have a good row about it. Oh, Betsy, how could you? Oh, what shall I do—what shall I do? I'll set fire to the villa. I'll do something that shall be the talk of the whole city. Nay, the West-end shall hear of it.

Enter MARY, L.

Mary, where's that man?

Mary. What man, sir?

Pet. The viper.

Mary. I haven't seen any viper, sir.

Pet. *(Sees Mary's nose.)* He's been at the maid! Oh, what a libertine! You know who I mean—the man with the curiosities.

Mary. Oh, yes, of course; he's gone to the inn with the postboy.

Pet. Postboy! With a postboy? They're going to elope. I've a brace of pistols that I bought to shoot the cats, when I took a pride in my garden. I'll load 'em both to the muzzle, and fire through and through him and her too. Mary, remain you here, and watch the door of that room. I'm going to look for my pistols.

Mary. *(Frightened.)* Oh, sir!

Pet. Aye, my pistols! If your missus comes from her room, say I'm gone out for the night—I'm gone out for a week. I don't think I shall ever come home any more. Now for vengeance.

(Exit at back.)

Mary. What can be the matter? It's very strange. Master seems to have gone mad all at once, and such a quiet little gentleman as he used to be. *(Gate bell rings, L.)* Someone at the gate; perhaps it's the viper, as master calls him, come back again. I declare the supper will be quite spoiled.

(Takes the light and exits, L. Stage dark. Mrs. Pettibone looks from her room, R.)

Mrs. Pettibone. No one here? I heard P. talking of pistols. Where can he be? Someone comes. Mr. Pathom, perhaps. I'll retire to my own room again.

(Exit, L.)

Enter MARY, carrying box, and showing in a LADY, veiled, and wrapped in shawl. She places box on table, and hands the Lady a chair.

Mary. Pray sit down, ma'am; the wind has blown my light out. I'll soon get another. Your box is on the table. I shall not be a minute.

(Exit, L.)

PETTIBONE appears at back with two large pistols.

Pet. Gracious powers, what figure is that? 'Tis Betsy, wrapped in her bonnet and shawl, waiting in the dark to elope with that fellow! And what's this? Her box corded up with all her little things ready. *(Runs to Lady, and seizes her.)* Oh, you traitress! You horrid woman! None of your nonsense; you are not going to run away from me in this manner. Don't struggle; it's no use.

as strong as a lion. There are two pistols on the table, and we'll go to destruction together.
(The Lady screams at his violence.)

MARY rushes in with lights—stage light—followed by FRANK, L. MRS. PETTIBONE comes from her room, R. Pettibone surveys them all in surprise and dismay.

Lady. (Unreiling.) Sir!

Mary. Master!

Mrs. P. P., dear!

Pet. Not Betsy—the lady I've pulled about so—not Betsy! Who are you, madam? Explain, before I faint away. Who are you?

Frank. That lady, sir, is my wife.

(Frank and Lady embrace.)

Pet. Your wife! And really you are not going to elope? You are still your own Pettibone's? But that kiss in the dark, madam; what can remove that stain?

Mrs. P. My candid confession.

Pet. Of what?

Mrs. P. That I overheard the test by which I was to be tried, and knowing in my heart that I did not deserve such a trial, I was resolved, as you

had thought proper to suspect me without a cause, for once to give you a reason for your jealousy.

Pet. (On his knees.) Oh, Betsy, forgive me!

Frank. This lady was married clandestinely to me before I left England for America. She is here to meet me with the welcome news that our marriage need no longer be kept a secret, and tomorrow a postchaise shall take us to our happy home.

Pet. (Rising.) Oh, my dear boy, you shall stay for a week and witness our renewed domestic felicity! (Shakes hands with Lady.) How d'ye do, madam? Very glad to see you, madam!

(Kisses her.)

Frank. Hallo, sir!

Pet. All right, my boy; now we've balanced the book, for you'll forgive me, dear. I'll never be such a noodle again. Come, Betsy, dear, kiss your P. and make him happy. I'll buy you a new satin dress. (She kisses him.) Hurra, I'm forgiven at last; and if you—(to the audience)—will be equally forgiving, and I think you will, for if I know human nature well, there's not one amongst you can lay your hands upon your hearts and say you do not like "A KISS IN THE DARK!"

CURTAIN.

Disposition of the Characters at the Fall of the Curtain.

MARY.

MRS. P.

PET.

LADY.

FRANK.

A MATCH IN THE DARK.

A COMEDIETTA, IN ONE ACT.

BY CHARLES DANCE.

First produced at the Olympic Theatre, February 21st, 1833.



Dramatis Personæ.

[See page 13.]

MR. CLEMENTS	...	...	...	(An Attorney)...	...	...	...	Mr. Webster.
VELLUM	...	...	...	(His Clerk)	...	...	...	Mr. Collier.
CAPTAIN COURTNEY	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	Mr. J. Vining.
O'FLINN	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	Mr. John Brougham.
ELLEN MARSDEN	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	Madame Vestris.
PRUDENCE MCINTYRE	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	Mrs. Orger.

TIME OF REPRESENTATION.—One Hour.

COSTUME.

CLEMENTS.—Black coat and breeches; black satin vest; shoes and buckles; black hose; bald wig.

VELLUM.—Quaint gray coat and breeches; slate-coloured vest; black shoes and buckles; gray hose; plain brown wig.

COURTNAY.—Military undress uniform.

O'FLINN.—Striped servant's vest and sleeves; white or drab breeches; drab gaiters; white cravat; sandy wig and whiskers.

ELLEN.—Handsome silk dress.

PRUDENCE.—Dark drab striped dress; white collar; handkerchief over shoulders; plain cap; black shoes and hose.

STAGE DIRECTIONS.

EXITS AND ENTRANCES.—R. means *Right*; L. *Left*; D. F. *Door in Flat*; R. D. *Right Door*; L. D. *Left Door*; S. E. *Second Entrance*; U. E. *Upper Entrance*; M. D. *Middle Door*; L. U. E. *Left Upper Entrance*; R. U. E. *Right Upper Entrance*; L. S. E. *Left Second Entrance*; P. S. *Prompt Side*; O. P. *Opposite Prompt*.

RELATIVE POSITIONS.—R. means *Right*; L. *Left*; C. *Centre*; R. C. *Right of Centre*; L. C. *Left of Centre*.

R.

RC.

C.

LC.

L.

• The Reader is supposed to be on the Stage, facing the Audience.

A MATCH IN THE DARK.

SCENE I.—Mr. Clements' Office. Table, with papers, deeds, &c., and two chairs in centre. Desk, with room for three or four clerks, railed off at back, on L. H. Another desk for one, R. H. 2 E., at which VELLUM is discovered, sitting on a very high stool, and mending his pen. Door in flat, R. H., practical.

Vel. (R. H., at desk.) I'm under great obligations to my grandmother, and I'm sorry that she didn't live for me to tell her so. "Tim," she used to say, "take care of trifles, and great things will take care of themselves." Left soon afterwards an orphan, without a penny, I was taken into Mr. Clements' service. My first duty was to sweep his office, and I swept it—I didn't smear it, I swept it—and thus I swept my way up to my present eminence.

Enter O'FLYNN, R. H. 1 E.

O'F. Sure, then, I must trouble your eminence to come down, for it's one o'clock, and the dinner's waiting.

Vel. (R. H.) I sha'n't move till I have finished my job.

O'F. Oh, bother the job! Sure the parchment will keep cold, and the mutton won't keep hot. Come, now, leave the skin of the sheep till after you've done with the flesh of it.

Vel. (Writing on.) Where's Mr. Clements?

O'F. Patting on his best black never-mention-ens. You know he's very particular, and he expects somebody else very particular just immediately.

Vel. Where's Mrs. Prudence, the housekeeper?

O'F. I'll engage she'll not be long. She has as good a nose for a joint of meat as any other pointer, and an elegant mouth for the same.

Vel. Don't speak so of her; though she is a servant, you ought to respect her, for she is much above her situation.

O'F. Then it's she that ought to respect me, for I'm not above mine. I'm a servant, and anybody's welcome to my secret that will pay me my wages.

Vel. (Getting down from his stool and coming forward, L. H.) You know what I mean. I repeat, you ought to respect her.

O'F. (R. H.) What the devil has any female woman to do with respect? Isn't it love the creatures are made for? To be sure, I had some notion of patronizing Mrs. Prudence in that line of business; but I'm completely bothered to get over that amazing big Scotch brogue of hers. When persons leave their own country and settle in another, it isn't elegant of them not to conform to the pronunciation of the same.

PRUDENCE, who has been concealed within the partition and railing on L. H., rises and appears above it.

Pru. What's that ye're saying, Mr. Flinn—what's that ye're saying?

(Vellum and O'Flinn start back.)

Vel. (L. H., aside.) Oh dear!

O'F. (R. H., aside.) Murder!

Pru. Afore I quit the particular spot in which I find myself, I think it necessary to gi' a short explanation why I was in it. I had come into this place just to fetch a wee bit wafer to seal a wee b. note upon Mr. Clements' ain affairs, when I hear Mr. Vellum coming—(ye'll ha' been talking to yerself, Mr. Vellum, I'm thinking, for it seemed as though there were some other body wi' ye)—and so I judged it prudent to hide myself, for fear it should be thought that I wished to overhear what ye said.

O'F. Don't mention it. Your explanation is as clear as a November fog—one of the London particulars.

Pru. (Advancing, c.) You're rude, sir—you're very rude; but I dinna heed ye. What I said was merely a wee note of explanation, and it was specially directed to Mr. Vellum.

O'F. (R. H.) Then you should have put one of your wee wafers into it, my jewel, for it came to the two of us.

Pru. (c., to Vellum.) Ye are satisfied, I hope.

Vel. (L. H.) To be sure I am; I'm always satisfied when I'm with you; your conversation is worth a shilling a folio to me; and as to overhearing, I never say anything but good of you.

Pru. (c.) Mr. Vellum, ye're an excellent young man, and a kind, and a civil, and a prudent.

O'F. (R. H.) Oh, be easy with this bowing and scraping now. Sure, the dinner's getting cold.

(Going, R. H.)

Pru. Stop a moment. Hec or cauld, I'll be glad to ken what for ye reflected but now on my Scotch accent.

O'F. Reflected! Botheration! Sure, I'm an Irishman, and never reflect upon anything.

Pru. Listen to me, Mr. O'Flinn. I am not the only Scotch individual that has left his ain country and travelled south for the benefit of his health and what not. Noo, sir; yemawn ken that the Scotch, like the Swiss, have a remarkable attachment to their ain country; and, therefore, when I left it, as all do wha can, I looked about like them, for something truly Scotch to bring with me, and like them again, the only convenient movable I had was my Scotch accent. That, sir, I have endeavoured to preserve in all its purity;

and though I am perfectly free frae that ridiculous jealousy which would prevent me from adopting every other English thing as my ain, I trust I have o'er much national pride to part wi' the smallest fraction of my dear native tongue.

O'F. Your dear tongue, do you say? By the powers, isn't it a shame your tongue should be dear when there's such a plenty of it?

Vel. Stop, sir; the defendant called no witnesses, and you're not entitled to a reply.

O'F. I don't want a reply. I only want my dinner.

Pru. Then I'm thinking that ye'll hae joost let the time slip through your fingers in which ye might hae eaten it. The master is fu' o' business the day, and the parties will be coming joost immediately.

O'F. That's true again, though I didn't believe what you said before. I'll speak to that mutton at once.

[Exit, R. H. 1 E.]

Vel. (Approaching Prudence, and taking her hand.) Mrs. Prudence!

Pru. Mr. Vellum!

Vel. I'm very sorry for O'Flinn's rudeness to you; but I was only a witness—not a party.

Pru. Did I accuse you, Mr. Vellum?

Vel. No; but I was afraid you might think—

Pru. (Interrupting him.) Think, think—what should I think, think ye? I've ay tauld ye that I think ye a very worthy young man, and I noo tell ye that I never kent ye guilty but o' ae indecorum!

Vel. And what is that? Why didn't you tell me before?

Pru. Nay; I could na tell ye before it happened. But listen to me noo. Ye ken ye're a single young man.

Vel. (Sighing.) Yes.

Pru. And ye also ken that I, though maybe a few years your ailder, am still a single woman.

Vel. (Eagerly.) Yes! (Aside.) She's going to save me the fright of proposing to her.

Pru. Well, then, as I value decorum aboon a' things, I would joost suggest to ye—(though I have no wish to hurt your feelings)—I say I would joost suggest to ye that my hand and your hand—

Vel. (Eagerly.) Oh, Mrs. Prudence, and do you really then—

Pru. (Interrupting her.) Nay, you're in o'er great a hurry. I was about to gi' ye the result of a deliberate opinion, which is, simply, that my hand has been locked in your hand for a langer time than propriety sanctions; that the way in which you have held it, nay, and continue to ha'd it, amounts to little short of what indecorous people call a squeeze.

Vel. (Letting go of her.) I'm sure I didn't mean to offend you.

Pru. I never thought ye did. (Bell rings, L. H.) There's the master's bell. I'll answer it; gang ye and get your dinner, ye'll soon be wanted. (Vellum crosses to R. H.) Mr. Vellum! (He returns. Holding out her hand high, and turning away her head.) I'm no angry with you.

(He rises on tiptoe and kisses it.) Vel. (Rubbing his hands for joy.) I shall soon set my cause down for trial, and hang me if I don't think it will be undefended.

[Exit, R. H. 1 E.]

Pru. Poor Vellum! He's a lad high in principle, though somewhat low in stature. If something

mair advantageous does na soon offer, I shall consider myself bound in honour to marry him.

(Bells rings again, L. H.)

Enter MR. CLEMENTS, with a letter in his hand, L. H. 1 E.

Clem. Is there nobody to answer the bell? Prudence, I have rung twice.

(Draws a chair, sits down, and looks attentively at the letter.)

Pru. The rest are taeeking their dinner, sir; so I was going to wait on you myself.

Clem. It is a most awkward business; I really don't see my way through it at all. Prudence!

Pru. Sir.

Clem. Can you keep a secret?

Pru. Aye, sure, sir; I'm far too fond o' yin to pairt wi't.

Clem. Then attend to me, for I may want your assistance. The parties I expect here are a Captain Courtney and a Miss Ellen Marsden. They are cousins. The Captain, though an ardent admirer of the ladies in general, had vowed never to marry. The lady, for some reason best known to herself, had come to a similar determination. About a twelvemonth ago, they became joint heirs to a large fortune. This led to a correspondence between them; and the correspondence, strange to say, has led to a mutual promise of marriage between two people who had both sworn it, and who have never yet seen each other.

Pru. It is a strange affair, sure enough, sir.

Clem. But the conditions are stranger still. They come here to-day to sign the marriage settlement, and to-morrow they are to be married. But it is agreed that they are not to see each other until they meet at the church, and if either violates the agreement, the contract becomes void, and the offending party loses his or her half of the fortune.

Pru. There's an unprecedented want o' caution about such an agreement as that, and the folks that made it must be joost clean daft.

Clem. That is what we fear, and their friends wish me, by some means or other, to induce them to give up their mad scheme, and see each other, before it is too late for repentance.

Pru. There is nae thing in life mair congenial til a woman's feelings than helping to make a match: except it may be noo and then lending a hand to break ain. Which way can I serve ye, sir?

(Clements rises.)

Clem. You will have to attend on Miss Marsden when she arrives. She will naturally make inquiries of you about the Captain; give her such a description of him as you think most likely to rouse her curiosity to see him before she ventures on so serious a step as marriage.

Pru. (Going.) A' wull, sir—a' wull; but I've no seen him.

Clem. Never mind that; but stay. Do it carefully, or she may suspect our design. Remember, Prudence, caution!

Pru. (Courtseying.) They aye gang thigether, sir.

[Exit, R. H. 1 E.]

Clem. A marriage settlement is the most unsettling thing I know. (Taking out his watch.) Half-past one. They ought to be—(Knock, L. H.) Oh, there's one of them, I suppose! Now for it

Enter O'FLINN, L. H. 1 E.

O'F. Captain Courtnay, sir!

Clem. Show him in!

O'F. Faith, he has shown himself in, sir!

Enter CAPTAIN COURTNAVY, hastily, L. H. 1 E.

[Exit O'Flinn, L. H. 1 E.]

Capt. C. Mr. Clements, how d'ye do: for I remember you, though I dare say you have almost forgotten me?

Clem. 'Tis a strange bargain, Captain, that brings you here.

Capt. C. I dare say you think so. Look you, Mr. Clements, I am a man of an ardent temperament.

Clem. You have left me no room to doubt that.

Capt. C. Well, I make no secret of it. While I was resolved never to marry, I looked only at the dark side. I saw nothing—believed nothing—but black looks, troublesome servants, squalling brats, doctors' fees, curtain lectures, milliners' bills, and *toujours perdrix*. Now that I have changed my intention—now that I am dearly, deeply, madly, distractedly in love, I dream of nothing—talk of nothing—will hear of nothing but rosy smiles, domestic peace, delicate attentions, general congratulations, lace veils, kid gloves, and carriages and four!

Clem. And yet you may one day awake from this dream.

Capt. C. What if I do? I have dreamt it, and such a dream is worth a hundred years of dull reality.

Clem. My dear sir, I merely advise; I have no right to dictate. The most that can be said of your project is, that it is somewhat whimsical.

Capt. C. Call my project whimsical if you will. When it first entered my head, I thought so, too. I laughed at it—by degrees I learnt to like it—then I became enchanted with it—then I went mad upon it.

Clem. That is the most sensible thing you've said yet.

Capt. C. Now, my dear old friend, don't you be so provokingly matter of fact. Ellen and I have fallen in love by letter, it is true. But have we not by that means made the one inquiry most important and most neglected? Do we not know each other's minds?

Clem. I hope the sequel will prove that you know your own.

Capt. C. Fear nothing for us. That pleasing interchange of personal attentions which others exhaust before marriage, will only commence with us after we are man and wife; and thus we shall be the more likely to go on as we begin—cheered and supported by the proud consciousness—
(Bell rings, L. H. Aside.) Damn it! That's she, perhaps. (Seems uneasy.)

Clem. Well, sir.

Capt. C. I say, sir, cheered and supported by the proud consciousness—
(Bell rings again, L. H. Aside.) There's that bell again, by Jupiter!

Clem. Go on, sir.

Capt. C. Where was I?

Clem. Proud consciousness—

Capt. C. Oh, I know, by the proud consciousness—
(Loses himself again.) It is no use my trying to go on, sir, till I know who that is who has just arrived.

Enter O'FLINN, L. H. 1 E.

O'F. If you please, sir, there's a female—

Capt. C. (Turning quickly from him, and walking to R. H. corner of the stage.) I knew it—I felt it—I was sure of it!

(Clements crosses to O'Flinn, and whispers to him.)

O'F. (Aside to him.) All right, sir!

Capt. C. (R. H., turning hastily, and to O'Flinn.) Well, sir—well, sir! Who is it?

O'F. (L. H.) The washerwoman, your honour.

Capt. C. (Angrily.) Psha! (Turns away again.)

Clem. (C.) Let her be shown to Mrs. Prudence.

[Exit O'Flinn, L. H. 1 E.]

Capt. C. Surely, sir, it is time that Ellen arrived?

Clem. She will not be long, I dare say. I don't like this business. I wish you were going to see her to-day.

Capt. C. See her? I should lose her for ever!

Clem. That I doubt.

Capt. C. Ah, sir, I see you don't know my Ellen.

Clem. I know other people's Ellens, and they're all pretty much alike.

Capt. C. If you leave me, send me word the moment she arrives. Yet why do I ask? She could not be in the same house with me, and I not know it.

Clem. No! Why, she has been here these five minutes.

Capt. C. She—who—what? Ellen—my Ellen? Oh, torture me not with this horrid suspense, but tell me, was my Ellen the—I'll kill that Irishman of yours! (Pacing the stage hurriedly.) Ellen here—my Ellen! Bestill, my bursting heart! I knew she was—felt she was—said she was! It was that infernal washerwoman that threw a wet blanket over my feelings.

Clem. Come, Captain, moderate these transports! You have business to attend to. (Calling at side.) Mr. Vellum!

Enter VELLUM, R. H. 1 E., with paper.

Captain Courtnay's settlement is quite ready, I believe?

Vel. Quite, sir.

Clem. Retire with him, then, into that room, and he'll be good enough to read it over. I'll join you presently.

Capt. C. I can't read now. It's useless for me to try.

Vel. I'll read it to you, sir, if you'll allow me.

Capt. C. I can't listen.

Clem. Come, I can't permit you to sign it without.

(Gently showing him towards the R. R. door.)

Capt. C. Mr. Clements, you must be a happy man.

Clem. Why so?

Capt. C. You're going to see my Ellen.

Clem. Well, well, you'll see her yourself to-morrow.

Capt. C. I doubt if I shall live till then. Now do, my dear sir, persuade her to relax a little, and let me see her as soon as the settlement is signed.

Clem. I will if I can.

Capt. C. No; will you? And will you come soon and tell me?

Clem. I will.

Capt. C. Then I'll try not to die just at present.

[Exit to inner room, R. F., followed by Vellum, carrying the marriage settlement, R. D. F.]

Clem. Ha, ha, ha! There's one ready to break the bargain! Now for the lady, and to see if I can get her to—(imitating Courtney)—try not to die just at present.

[Exit, R. 1 E.]

SCENE II.—Another Chamber in Clements' House, 1 G. Door in flat, R. H. Table and two chairs put on, L. C.

PRUDENCE opens the door, and peeps into the room, R. F.

Pru. There's naebody here, miss; and so, if ye find that chamber ower sma', ye may joost change to this.

(Ellen pulls her back somewhat roughly, and forces her way before her into the room, Prudence following.)

El. Now do let me go in, will you? Mercy on us! That small room is enough to stifle one. (Drawing a long breath, and at the same time taking a handkerchief from her throat and throwing open her collar.) I could hardly breathe in it.

(Sits down at table on L. C.)

Pru. (R. H.) Weel, miss, I must say that the plan you've adopted for choosing a partner for life is the maist extraordinary that ever I heard of. It's charged against us, that in Scotland we sometimes settle thae matters by joost a single loup ower a broomstick; but short as that ceremony unquestionably is, naebody accuses us of not looking afore we loup.

El. I know it's extraordinary; I do it because it's extraordinary—I hate everything ordinary.

Pru. Even to the length of personal appearance in a man, may be—(courtesying)—begging your pardon for the liberty I take in saying so.

El. Why, that is a subject which affects all women, more or less; though me, perhaps, less than any other woman in the world.

Pru. I might conscientiously offer ye ma testimony upon that head, for ye hae never aince hinted a wish to ken what sort of a body to look at is your intended husband, Captain Courtney.

El. (Rising, and going eagerly towards her.) Have you seen him, then?

Pru. Yes, sure, miss.

El. (Eagerly.) Why didn't you tell me so? Is he handsome? (Checking herself.) Don't answer me; I don't want to know. I can't tell why I ask; it was impulse. (Sits down.)

Pru. And no an unnatural impulse neither, I should say, if I was asked.

El. But you were not asked.

Pru. (Courtesying.) Very true, miss; and I canna regret that I was not. There are few things mair disagreeable sometimes than the necessity of speaking truth.

El. (Eagerly rising.) Is he ugly? (Checking herself.) Don't answer me; I don't want to know. I have seen him myself. (Sits down.)

Pru. Then I was under a mistake, for I thought that ye had never met.

El. I have done better. I have seen his person in the polished mirror of his mind, and I feel that I should love him dearly as I do now, though he were lame, though he were humpbacked, though he squinted—nay, even though he had red hair.

Pru. And so, miss, you have seen him in reality, after all?

El. What do you mean? I told you I never had.

Pru. Then it's joost naething short o' a miracle that ye should describe with such remarkable precision the misfortunes with which it has pleased Providence to afflict him.

El. How dare you say so? You'll drive me mad! (Checking herself.) I say, if I were like the generality of women, you would drive me mad. As it is, it will be my glory to show him how little of selfish feeling is mixed up with my admiration of him. I am even glad to learn what you tell me, and proud to think that it has shaken my resolution no more than if you had merely said that he had lost an arm in his country's service.

Pru. Eh? Goodness me! I forgot to mention that.

El. What? An arm gone, too? (Aside.) He never hinted those things in his letters. (Aloud.) You'll make me hate you. (Aside.) Yet what of that? I shall love him the more. (Aloud.) Don't mind what I said. I'm not angry with you; it was impulse.

Pru. Ye have wonderfn' firmness, miss. It's a great mercy for the poor afflicted gentleman to fall into such hands.

El. He shall learn to exult in his afflictions; for they shall purchase him such care as never yet was shown to man by woman.

Pru. (Aside.) I never heard sic a lassie in a' my life. I do believe she would like the man better if he was broken a' to bits!

El. One moment.

Pru. Yes, miss.

El. It doesn't signify, it's not of the least consequence; but just tell me, does the Captain squint with both eyes?

Pru. Oh, no, miss; only wi' the right. There's a reason against his doing so with the left.

El. (Aside.) That's some relief, however. (Aloud.) But what do you mean by a reason against his doing so with the left?

Pru. He has been so unlucky as to lose that ain a'thegither.

El. (Much moved.) It's false—it must be false! You are deceiving me, and you know it! (Aside, and more calmly.) And yet what motive could she have? (To Prudence.) I spoke sharply to you, didn't I? Think no more of it; it was impulse.

Enter CLEMENTS, L. H. 1 E.

Clem. Ah, my little madeap friend! So, here you are at last, upon your wild-geese expedition.

El. Some people say that all are geese who marry. If so, at least there is more spirit about a wild goose than a tame one.

Clem. Well, well, but stay! (Significantly to Prudence.) I hope my worthy housekeeper here has attended to my instructions.

Pru. I hae done my best, sir.

Clem. And furnished you with everything you asked for?

El. More, much more, than I asked for—(aside) or wished for.

Clem. Oh, dear, you're very good to say so! Come, then, shall we proceed to business? The settlement is ready, and the Captain has signed by this time.

El. Stay! (Aside.) I must learn if all these dreadful things are true. (Aloud.) Allow me a few moments' conversation with you.

Clem. By all means. Prudence, you may leave us.

Pru. (Hesitating to go.) Sir?

Clem. You may leave us, I say. You're in the way—you're not wanted.

Pru. (Aside.) I'm thinking I had better be in the way, for fear I should be wanted.

[Exit, door in flat, R. H. They sit.]

El. Mr. Clements, you are an old and kind friend of our family. Be it impulse or be it rashness, which has led me to the brink of the precipice on which I stand, honour and consistency shall make me leap it.

Clem. For this, at least, the world cannot blame you.

El. Sir, upon that point the world is at liberty to exercise its own discretion.

Clem. Nay, all I meant was—

El. My dear sir, don't misunderstand me. To the opinion of the wise and good I trust I shall never be indifferent; but it provokes me to be threatened with what is miscalled the opinion of the world, when I know that it is the worst only who keep up a constant fire against their neighbours' conduct, to drown the cries which would else be heard against their own.

Clem. My dear lady, these sentiments would do honour to one—

El. Less giddy than you thought me, eh? Thank you. I am about, as you know, after all my fine determinations, to trust my happiness on board the crazy vessel of matrimony.

Clem. And in a manner—

El. Most calculated to increase the usual perils of the voyage. All that I have considered and dismissed. It is my cousin's mind with which I am in love; and so lost have I been in admiration of that, that a thought about his person never once entered my head.

Clem. (Aside.) So, so! My plan has succeeded. Well done, Mrs. Prudence! *(Aloud.)* I see—and now you begin to fear lest your cousin's handsome face and figure—

El. (Astonished.) Handsome face and figure, sir! *(Aside.)* What can he mean? *(Aloud and eagerly.)* Oblige me by letting me hear, from your own lips, a minute description of his person.

Clem. (Confused.) Me, ma'am? *(Rising.)*

El. You, sir!

Clem. (Aside.) I have made a nice mess of it! I haven't a guess of what she has been told. *(Aloud.)* Can't, miss—can't, indeed!

El. (Taking his hand and pulling him down into his chair.) Sir, I'm a creature of impulse, and you must.

Clem. Really, you place me in a most awkward situation! *(Aside.)* How shall I get out of it? *(Aloud.)* You wish me to repeat what Mrs. Prudence said.

(The word "Prudence," on this and the two following occasions, is uttered as if he was calling her.)

El. I wish for the truth.

Clem. (Aside.) One is as difficult as the other. *(Aloud.)* Really, ma'am, you had better excuse me. Prudence—

El. (Astonished at the loudness of his voice.) Well, sir?

Clem. Mrs. Prudence, I say—

El. Well, sir?

Re-enter PRUDENCE, D. F. R. H., perceived only by Clements

Clem. (Aside.) Oh, there she is at last! *(To*

Ellen.) I beg your pardon, but one of my clerks is very deaf, and I have gotten a habit of speaking loud. Mrs. Prudence, I say, is a discreet person, and—*(with a side glance, and significantly, to Prudence)*—though I have no idea how she described the Captain to you, I make no doubt that her description was correct.

El. Still, sir, it waits for confirmation. In the first place, what say you to his walk?

Clem. Oh, he walks very well!

El. (Doubtfully.) Very well, do you say?

(Prudence catches Clements' attention, and imitates lameness.)

Clem. (Checking himself.) For a lame man.

El. Then his shoulders?

Clem. His shoulders? Th—they're straight enough.

El. Straight?

(Prudence imitates a humpbacked person.)

Clem. (Checking himself.) Yes, certainly—his shoulders. There is a slight prominence between them, as I imagine you have been told.

El. (Fixing Mr. Clements, and looking hard in his face.) His eyes—look they as mine do?

Clem. (Unable to escape from her gaze, and wishing to gain time.) Why, not exactly. You couldn't expect such brilliancy in a man's eyes.

El. Nay, sir; a truce with silly compliment. Have they any defect?

(Prudence describes a squint by passing her two fore fingers in contrary directions across her eyes.)

Clem. A cast—a slight cast.

El. In both?

Clem. In both. *(Prudence covers one eye with her hand. Clements checks himself, but proceeds confusedly, as not quite understanding her.)* That is, it used to be in both; but—but—

(Not knowing what to say, he covers one eye with his hand, in imitation of Prudence.)

El. Enough; say no more. And yet one point remains—the colour of his hair?

Clem. His hair? Oh, that is—that is—

(Looks at Prudence, who cannot readily find a way to convey her meaning to him. At length she points to one of a bunch of flowers painted on the chimney-board)

El. Well, sir, that is—

(Clem. (Confused.) That is—*(observing Prudence)*—pink.

El. (Astonished.) Pink!

(Prudence points again.)

Clem. Red, I mean—red.

El. I am satisfied.

(Rises.)

Clem. (Aside, and rising.) Then you are very easily satisfied, I must say.

El. You think perhaps that these misfortunes of the Captain will change my sentiments towards him?

Clem. I own your fortitude surprises me. And as to the Captain, when he receives you into his arms—

El. His arms, sir? Arms did you say?

Clem. Yes; why not? *(Prudence describes the loss of an arm. He checks himself.)* That is, I mean, you know—*(Imitating Prudence.)*

El. Yes, yes, I know. *(Eagerly.)* Come, come, the settlement!

Clem. One word in my turn. I have a message to you from the Captain.

El. (*Mournfully.*) From him? Poor fellow! What says he?

Clem. He begs—he entreats of you to shorten the period of his suspense; and the settlement once signed, to let him behold you to-day.

El. Impossible! Yet, stay; his misfortunes have touched me, and I long to convince him of my unchanged attachment. Now mind, sir, I still hold him strictly to the agreement that we see not each other till to-morrow; but if he chooses to consent that we shall both be blindfolded, I will consent to meet and to converse with him to-day. These are the conditions. Do you accept them for him?

Clem. You will grant no better?

El. None.

Clem. Then I accept. (*Aside.*) And I must take all chances for the rest. (*Crosses to R. H.*)

El. Upon honour, sir?

Clem. Upon honour. (*Aside.*) This is new business for an attorney's office.

El. Come, then. Fortune and Love are both depicted blind; for once I'll trust them, and blindly follow both.

[*Exit Ellen and Clements, R. H. 1 E.*]

Pru. (*Coming forward.*) She's a bonny lassie to look at; but I'm thinking she'll be joost a crazy body, to choose a husband wi' her een shut, when if she'd but keep them half open she'd see a better, may be.

Enter VELLUM, L. H. 1 E.

Vel. Mistress M'Intyre!

Pru. What for do you denominate me *Mistress* M'Intyre, Mr. Vellum? I wear a cap, it's true; because when I'm in England it's no but prudent to do as they do in England; but I've no yet surrendered my liberty to the keeping o' any man, whatever circumstances and due consideration may hereafter induce me to do.

Vel. If the word is objectionable, I'll strike it out; only listen to what I say, and then give me an answer.

Pru. I never gave an answer in my life without a careful weighing of the question.

Vel. I've long looked up to you, and long wished to speak to you upon a particular subject, but I always feared that my case wasn't strong enough to go to a jury, and whenever I have tried to open the pleadings, my tongue has turned to parchment.

Pru. (*Aside.*) It joost amazes me to see what a fluster men put themselves into about sic a simple thing as joost asking a woman to marry them.

Vel. To-day I have been reading Captain Courtney's settlement, until I have determined to come, if possible, to a settlement with you. I feel almost as bold as a captain myself. To be brief, you have long engrossed my thoughts, and I now come to serve you personally with a writ of attachment.

Pru. I fancy I hae been ower lang in a lawyer's service to mistake your meaning; but in matters of this sort it's joost impossible to be ower explicit. Is it your wish to marry me?

Vel. (*Eagerly.*) It is—it is!

Pru. (*Coolly.*) Weel, I thought sae. Noo I'll joost tell ye—

Vel. Yes.

Pru. Nay, I'm not going to tell ye yes till ye hae tauld me twa or three things inair. In the first place, what's your income?

Vel. Two guineas a week.

Pru. Gude. Hae ye any perquisites?

Vel. None.

Pru. That's a pity. Ony relations?

Vel. None.

Pru. That macks amends. Ony debts?

Vel. None.

Pru. Gude again. Then, Mr. Vellum, I'll joost frankly declare to ye—

Vel. Yes.

Pru. Eh, gudeness me, I'm ower precipitate. What's your age? (*Stopping him.*) But never mind; I'm not curious about that. Hae ye land by ony siller?

Vel. I have eighty pounds in the savings bank.

Pru. (*Earnestly.*) You're an excellent young man, and I think I need na ask ye anither question; but joost aince for a'—

Vel. Well?

Pru. (*Checking herself.*) Has Mr. Clements made you ony promise of an increase o' salary?

Vel. (*Looking up in her face.*) I hope to rise; but, till I do, oh, look down upon me with favour! Come, come, say you'll be bound in vellum.

(*Stretching out his arms.*)

Pru. Weel, weel, I believe I'm no called upon to keep ye any langer in suspense, and that I may at aince—

Enter O'FLINN, R. H. 1 E.

O'F. Oh, thunder and turf, but that will never do. Mr. Vellum, the master wants you in a pig's whisper.

Vel. (*Aside.*) How unfortunate!

O'F. (*Aside to Prudence.*) And I want you, my darling. I've something mighty particular to say to you, touching your future prospects.

Vel. (*To O'Flinn.*) Just go and tell him I'll come in a minnte.

O'F. The devil a foot! Go yourself, and see how you like it. (*Aside to Prudence.*) Get rid of him, I tell you, and it will be for your advantage.

Pru. (*Aside.*) It would betray an extreme want o' caution to dispose of my future prospects without hearing what everybody has to say upon the subject. (*To Vellum.*) Never lose sight o' business. Gang to the master. I'll wait for ye here.

Vel. (*Aside.*) I don't half like leaving her with that Irishman. (*Aloud. Crosses to R. H.*) Well, I sha'n't be long.

[*Exit, R. H. 1 E.*]

O'F. (*R. H., looking after him.*) Long! Who the devil ever thought you would that looked at you? (*To Prudence.*) Prudence, my darling, come here to me, and I'll make your fortune.

Pru. (*L. H., eagerly.*) Which way will that be, Mr. O'Flinn?

O'F. I'll make a man of you, my jewel. Would you like a situation in a great family?

Pru. That depends upon the wages.

O'F. The wages of love is joy. My family is as old as the letter O; and I'll make you Mistress O'Flinn.

Pru. I believe you need na trouble yoursel' to tack my character, for I've as good as accepted a situation as wife to Mr. Vellum.

O'F. Poh! What in the name of all that's big and little should a fine creature like you do with such a tomtit of a husband as that? Or what the devil has come to the world entirely that personal appearance is to go for nothing?

Pru. I canna deny that appearances are in your favour, Mr. O'Flinn, but I fancy you'd find it

equally as difficult to show that realities are not in his.

O'F. Oh, murder! Have you no appetite for the sublime and beautiful?

Pru. I have an excellent appetite for breakfast, dinner, tea, and supper; and Mr. Vellum has two guineas a week, a prospect o' a rise, nae relations, nae debts, and a considerable penny in the savings bank.

(Crosses to R. H.)

O'F. Prospect of a rise, has he? Here he comes, and I'll knock him down.

Re-enter VELLUM, R. H. 1 E.

Vel. (R. H., approaching Prudence.) Well, I've not been long.

O'F. (L. H.) Come out o' that!

Vel. Out of what?

O'F. I sha'n't explain myself for fear that you'd misunderstand me; but you know what I mean. (Putting himself in a boxing attitude.) See here!

Vel. (Running behind Prudence.) Come, no nonsense. I never fought in my life.

O'F. He never fought! There's a savage! Then it's high time you began.

Pru. Nay; goodness sake, be peaceful! I canna bear this.

Vel. (Peeping from behind Prudence.) I'll bring an action against you.

O'F. Try it.

Pru. Mr. O'Flinn, hear me. Ye cannot expect a Scotch person to answer a question as quickly as an Irish body will put it. I'll tack your proposition into consideration, and let ye ken by-and-by.

O'F. Then I'll not manslaughter him yet. How long will you be?

Pru. Half an hour, may be.

O'F. Do you hear that, you office copy of a man, you? You're respited for half an hour.

Vel. If you call me office copy, I'll make you pay for it.

(O'Flinn rushes on Vellum. Prudence gets between them.)

Pru. Nay, I canna have this! Be peaceable, and listen to me, or I'll marry neither o' ye. Mr. Vellum, quit the room.

(Vellum is going, slowly, R. H.)

O'F. The top o' the morning to you, Mr. Vellum.

Vel. The bottom of the Thames to you, Mr. O'Flinn.

Pru. Mr. O'Flinn.

O'F. My jewel.

Pru. Quit the room.

O'F. Oh, murder! Well, what's sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander, any way.

[Exit, L. H. 1 E.]

Pru. Mr. Vellum.

Vel. Yes.

Pru. Where are ye ganging to?

Vel. You told me to go.

Pru. Yes; but I did na tell you to gang by yersel'. (He runs back to her.) Never mind; I'll tak care o' ye, my little friend.

[Exeunt together, R. H. 1 E., she patting his head.]

SCENE III.—Another Room in Clements' House, 2 and 3 G. Doors in flat, R. and L., practical, backed by chamber. Table with books and two chairs in C.

Enter from door, R. H. F., CAPTAIN COURTNAY, followed by CLEMENTS, carrying in his hand a silk handkerchief.

Capt. C. And these are the only conditions?

Clem. She is resolute.

Capt. C. Is it to be believed that, on a point of so much importance, a woman should have less curiosity than a man?

Clem. (Offering to blind him.) Come, we lose time. Your cousin is in that room.

Capt. C. In that room? Oh, Mr. Clements if you have the feelings of a man, grant me one favour—let me peep through the key-hole!

Clem. No; I am as anxious as you are that you should see her; nay, more. I dread the consequences of your marrying her without; but I will not forfeit my word. Come!

Capt. C. Then describe her to me.

Clem. What is the use of talking to a man who is not in his right senses? If I were to tell you that she had but one eye and one arm, that she squinted, was lame, crooked, and had red hair, you would not believe me.

Capt. C. (Sitting down.) I must submit to my fate.

(Clements binds the handkerchief over his eyes.)

Clem. (Putting his head before him while he speaks, and then withdrawing it.) Can you see me before you?

Capt. C. I can't see you; but I know you are there by the sound of your voice.

Clem. That will do. (Going towards door, L. H. F.) Now be patient; the crisis of your fate approaches.

[Exit, D. F. L. H.]

Capt. C. Patient! It's a good time to talk about patience! (Calling.) Mr. Clements! (Louder.) Mr. Clements! This handkerchief is too tight! Mr. Clements! No answer. He is gone, and she is coming.

Love's blind, they say—

Oh, never, nay!

Hush! What's that? Surely a door opened.

(Listens. L. H. D. F. opens, and CLEMENTS reappears, leading in ELLEN, blindfolded.)

Clem. Gently, gently, this way!

El. Are we now in the room?

Capt. C. (Ardently.) She speaks! 'Tis she, herself! Oh, heart, be patient!

((He rises and bows very respectfully in an opposite direction.))

Clem. (Seats Ellen in a chair, he then seats Courtney in another chair beside her, and on her right hand, then passing to Courtney's right hand.) Captain Courtney, you are now in the presence of your dearly-beloved cousin and future counsellor. (Courtney turns towards him, and bows with his back towards Ellen. Clements passes to Ellen's left hand, and continues.) Miss Marsden, the Captain is beside you. (Ellen turns towards him and bows, which brings her back to back with Courtney.) I now leave you together, with my best wishes for a happy termination to this match in the dark. May your eyes be ever open to each other's virtues; and if you have faults—if you have defects, may they continue hidden from each other as they are at this moment. Adieu! (Retiring.) When you hear me close the door, you will be alone.

[Exit by door, F. L. H., which he slams for them to hear. A pause, during which both seem fidgety.]

El. Must the lady speak first, sir?

Capt. C. (Starting, and facing the audience.) By no means.

El. (*Doing the same.*) I suspect she must, though.

Capt. C. Pardon me if the novel position in which I find myself has for a moment overpowered me. I see before me—that is, I hear before me—the woman whom— But you have read my letters, and you know my sentiments. Judge, then, what I must feel when a few short moments may obscure the radiant light which my imagination has thrown around you, and shake the brilliant fabric of my mind to its foundation.

El. (*Aside.*) So, so, noble Captain! Beware—beware! (*Aloud, and sharply.*) You doubt me, then?

Capt. C. No, no, not you; I only doubt—

El. You hesitate!

Capt. C. No, no; I can't make you see what I mean.

El. Have I not trusted you? What security had I beyond your own letter?

Capt. C. Forgive my momentary blindness. I own you my superior.

El. What if I make you own it on another point? You say you love me

Capt. C. Love! Call it rather adoration.

El. Be it so. Do you think me handsome?

Capt. C. I see your face reflected in your mind; it must be beautiful!

El. What if it should be otherwise?

Capt. C. Seek not to torment me. It cannot, it cannot!

El. What if I should prove seriously deformed?

Capt. C. Ellen, you alarm me!

El. (*Aside.*) Aha, Captain! I thought so!

Capt. C. (*Aside.*) What means she? Surely—and yet those words of Mr. Clements, "I dread the consequences of your marrying without seeing her!" (*Aloud and anxiously.*) What would you give me to unders and?

El. Simply that the affection of a woman, compared to that of a man, is as strength to weakness. But to the proof. Answer me two questions. Up to the time of your coming hither, did you or did you not think me free from personal defects?

Capt. C. Assuredly I did.

El. Do you think so still?

Capt. C. I imagine—I believe—I trust—I hope—I think—I think so!

El. Enough! I here solemnly release you from your engagement to me, and from all the penalties attendant on its non-fulfilment.

Capt. C. To what end?

El. A moment's patience. I now dare you to renew that engagement, and to exchange pledges with me that it shall make no difference in the resolves of either, although the other shall prove to have but one eye and one arm.

Capt. C. Ellen!

El. To be humpbacked,

Capt. C. Ellen!

El. To squint and to have red hair.

Capt. C. (*Rising, and frantically.*) Ellen! Tortures! This is too much to bear! My own eyes shall convince me! (*Tears off bandage.*) What do I see? The realization of my waking dreams, the woman—

El. The woman you have lost for ever (*Calling.*) Mr. Clements!

Re-enter CLEMENTS, door, L. H. flat.

Clem. (*Going to her*) Nay, nay; permit me—

El. Not a word, sir; lead me hence!

[*Clements leads her to door, L. H. flat, at which she pauses, turns, and courts with dignity, in the opposite direction to Courtney. Exit Ellen and Clements, door, L. H. flat.*]

Capt. C. Gone, and for ever! Fool, madman that I am, what have I done? But it serves me right. I had sworn never to trust my happiness in woman's keeping, and this is the punishment for perjury. But I will renew my oath, and this time keep it strictly. I, Ernest Courtney—

Re-enter CLEMENTS, door, L. H. flat.

Clem. (*L. H., advancing to Captain Courtney.*) Of Maidstone, in the county of Kent, captain of dragoons!

Capt. C. (*R. H.*) Oh, Mr. Clements, in pity do something to reconcile me to that cruel fair one!

Clem. I fear it is impossible.

Capt. C. Say not so; a sentence of death would be kinder. Where is she?

Clem. Preparing to depart; the carriage is already ordered.

Capt. C. Stop her

Clem. I can't.

Capt. C. Then look for suicide in your house.

Clem. Don't kill yourself here; I'm the coroner.

Capt. C. I don't care for that. I'm a man of an ardent temperament.

Clem. That I see; but you must not shoot yourself.

Capt. C. Then I'll shoot you.

Clem. Worse and worse! Kill the coroner! Who is to hold the inquest on him?

Capt. C. Well, I'll shoot somebody if you don't bring her back.

Clem. (*Aside.*) I am pleasantly situated, between a man of an ardent temperament and a lady of impulse.

Capt. C. (*Impatiently.*) What's your decision?

Clem. Prompt, when I deal with a madman.

Capt. C. What am I to do?

Clem. Return to that room.

(*Pointing to room, R. H.*)

Capt. C. What then?

Clem. Wait till I come.

Capt. C. What will you do?

Clem. Get her to remain, by saying you are gone.

Capt. C. What next?

Clem. Introduce you to her as somebody else.

Capt. C. What good will that do?

Clem. That I leave you to find out.

(*During the last colloquy, which should be given with as much rapidity as is consistent with distinctness, they have retired gradually up the stage, and have now arrived at the doors, Courtney, R. H. F., Clements, L. H. F.*)

Capt. C. A gleam of sunshine breaks in upon me!

Clem. Then profit by it. This time you go to work with your eyes open. Keep them open, and keep that door shut.

[*Exeunt severally, doors, R. and L. flat.*]

After a moment's pause, CLEMENTS re-enters at door, L. H. flat, conducting MISS MARSDEN

El. (*R. H.*) You are sure he is gone?

Clem. Certain.

El. Then I will remain. We meet no more!

Clem. (L. H.) What has counselled you to this rash act?

El. My only mentor—impulse.

Clem. I fear your mentor will this time prove a tormentor. You will be sorry for this act.

El. You mistake. I may regret the consequences, not the act.

Clem. (Aside.) How shall I get away?

Enter O'FLINN, L. H. 1 E.

O'F. You're wanted, sir.

Clem. (Aside.) That's lucky. (Aloud.) Excuse me for a few moments.

[Exit, preceded by O'Flinn, L. H. 1 E.]

El. (Having walked thoughtfully to a chair.) Why, why did I love?

SONG.*—ELLEN.

Why—why did I love?
But 'tis past—'tis past for ever.
Vainly shall man endeavour
Henceforth my heart to move
Why—why did I love?
I, who laughed at its chain,
Have worn it, I vow;
But 'tis broken, and now
I laugh it to scorn again.
Why—why did I love?
Free, free as the wind
That courses the green vales through.
No fetter shall bind
My heart or mind,
And Cupid shall find
That I'll only be blind
In future his charms unto.
Why—why did I love?

(At the end of the song she takes a book and sits down, turns over the leaves, evidently without reading, and hums the burden of the song to herself, "Why did I love?" at first with affected indifference, by degrees more

* When the part of Ellen Marsden is played by an actress who does not sing, the following speech must take the place of the song:—

El. (Having walked thoughtfully to a chair and seated herself.) This, then, is the end of my romance. My palace of picture cards has fallen; my castle in the air has vanished from my sight. (More seriously.) My long slumbering affections have been awakened but to be told that they must sleep forever! (Checking herself.) Ellen! Ellen Marsden! What are you doing? Getting thus serious, and about a man, too? For shame, for shame! (Playing with her handkerchief, and occasionally biting it.) I must shake off this folly, and I will; I can—to be sure I can—as easily as I would throw aside a dress of which the fashion ceased to please me. One effort and 'tis gone. There, I have loved, but I love no more. You hear me, sir, do you not? Captain Courtney, 'tis to you I speak. I say, sir, I love no more! What, you grow serious on it, do you? Ha, ha, ha! Why don't you laugh? Why don't you laugh, as I do? Ha, ha, ha!

(Laughs herself by degrees into a flood of tears, and conceals her face in her handkerchief.)

and more seriously, until the book falls from her hand, she bursts into tears, and conceals her face. During this, CLEMENTS has re-entered, L. H. 1 E., unobserved, and approached her cautiously.)

Clem. (L. H.) Ah, in tears? I told you you would be sorry for what you had done.

El. (Recovering herself, and starting up hastily.) Sir, I request you not to comment upon feelings which you cannot comprehend. You compel me to tell you that you take a liberty.

Clem. I did not mean to offend you, Miss Marsden.

El. (Altering her tone.) Stay, my dear sir; it is I who should apologise to you. I spoke from impulse, but this time I admit that impulse was in the wrong. (Holding her hand to him.) Forgive me. (With emotion.) I must not quarrel with everybody to-day.

Enter VELLUM, L. H. 1 E.

Vel. Captain Willoughby, sir, has stepped back to say, that if you could write that note now, he'd be glad to take it with him.

Clem. Ask him to come in.

[Exit Vellum, L. H. 1 E.]

El. (R. H.) Here, sir?

Clem. Yes; why not?

El. Then permit me to retire. I am in no mood to meet a stranger.

Clem. Come, come, my little friend, I won't allow it; you must rouse yourself. Besides, you have nothing to fear from poor Willoughby. He is far too miserable himself just now to spare a thought for others.

El. (Interested.) Miserable? From what cause?

Clem. Oh, it's a long story; I'll tell it to you some other time! The sum of it is, that he was on the point of marriage with a woman he adored, and that it has been my painful task to announce to him it's breaking off. It was he whom I went out to see just now.

El. Poor fellow!

Clem. (Tenderly.) Do you feel for him?

El. From my soul!

Clem. (Aside and significantly.) I thought you would.

Enter COURTNEY, L. H. 1 E.

Ah, Willoughby, my dear friend, come in for five minutes, and I will write the note you wish. But first allow me to present you to this lady. (Introducing them.) Captain Willoughby, Miss Marsden. And now I must get you both to excuse me for a short time. (Aside to Ellen.) Make allowance for his situation and speak to him. (Aside to Courtney.) Courage, Captain, the enemy is before you. (Crosses to L. H.)

Capt. C. (Catching him by the skirt.) But how shall I disguise my voice?

Clem. (Speaking hoarsely.) Catch a cold.

[Exit, L. H. 1 E.]

Capt. C. (L. H., after a short pause, and endeavouring to speak as if he had a cold.) Pardon me, madam, for my forgetfulness. My only apology is that I am unwell.

El. Unwell, sir? Had you not better sit down?

Capt. C. You are very kind. (He puts chairs, they sit.) The fact is, madam, that I feel ashamed

of my apparent awkwardness; but mine is a malady of the mind.

El. (R. H.) Sir, I will be frank with you; I know it.

Capt. C. (L. H.) You know it?

El. Yes, this moment, from Mr. Clements. If it will afford you the slightest consolation, believe me, I feel deeply for you.

Capt. C. (Eagerly.) You feel for me, madam? You? (Aside.) I shall forget myself. (Aloud.) And yet I deserve not your pity. I suffer from my own rashness.

El. Is your offence so very heavy?

Capt. C. Circumstances only made it so. I broke an engagement; but it was excess of love that made me break it.

El. Indeed! An offence one would think most pardonable in a woman's sight. But you interest me in your story. Dare I ask it?

Capt. C. Surely. In few words, then, my affections were captivated by a being—pardon me, madam—like yourself, one of the loveliest of her sex. I proposed for her, and was accepted. One condition only was annexed; she wished to try me by the test of absence. A twelvemonth was the period fixed. During that time I was not even to write to her. I endeavoured, laboured, struggled to comply. One single day of my novitiate was unexpired. That day, that little day, was more than I could bear. Confident of the strength of my attachment, I returned from transportation, and was condemned to death.

El. (Aside.) Strange coincidence! (Aloud.) Was this all?

Capt. C. On my honour, *all*; and the communication to me is, "You have broken your word, and I have done with you for ever."

El. (Earnestly.) She is wrong, headstrong, foolish, and she will suffer for it more than you will.

Capt. C. (Thrown off his guard, and speaking in his own voice.) Do you say so—you? Oh, that you could see her and persuade her!

El. (Aside.) Ah, that voice! My eyes were blinded, yet my ears cannot deceive me. 'Tis he—'tis Courtnay speaks! (To Courtnay.) Think no more of it, sir; I spoke from impulse.

Capt. C. Nay, let me not lose the interest I have excited in you. I feel that you are the only being who can prevail with her.

El. (Aside.) I thought I could not be mistaken; it's all a trick, but I will be revenged. I'm glad he doesn't squint, though; and I'm not sorry he has two eyes and two arms, but I will be revenged; the black hair is a decided relief, but I will be revenged. (Aloud.) Captain Willoughby, I will not attempt to conceal from you that you have excited an interest in me—a strong interest.

Capt. C. (Aside.) What does she mean?

El. It seems almost impossible that any woman can persuade herself, from so slight a cause, to part for ever from one whose conversation, whose manners, nay, more, whose advantages of face and figure, place him so far beyond the generality of his sex.

Capt. C. (Aside.) D—n it! She's going to make me jealous of myself. (Aloud.) Madam, you do me too much honour.

El. The lady has evidently ill-treated you. Forget her.

Capt. C. I could as soon forget to live.

El. So I thought once.

Capt. C. You, madam?

El. Yes; I was once situated as you are now.

Capt. C. And have you forgotten?

El. Entirely. Already thoughts of another—
(Looking tenderly at him.)

Capt. C. Madam, I live but for one being; that being I feel that you could influence, and—

El. (Still tenderly.) Nay; turn your thoughts to someone else.

Capt. C. (Aside.) How beautiful she looks!

El. Will you not, Captain?

Capt. C. (Forgetting himself, and rapturously.) Will I not?

El. Ay, will you not, Captain—Willoughby?

Capt. C. (Aside.) Oh, damn it! That Willoughby has destroyed us all. (Aloud.) Madam, strange as your language is, I presume it is impossible for me to mistake your meaning.

El. For fear you should, I shall be more explicit. You have evidently a vacancy for a wife. (Courtseying.) I propose to fill it.

Capt. C. Madam! Miss Marsden! Ellen!—for know to your confusion, that it is Courtnay himself who addresses you—a few short minutes since, my solitary care in life was to unite my destinies with yours; that wish is gone for ever, and I look with gratitude upon the escape I have had. I am a man of an ardent temperament, but not yet quite so mad as to marry a woman who could first cast me off for the veriest trifle of an offence, and almost in the next moment avow herself in love with the first—the first—(recollecting that he is speaking of himself)—d—d good-looking fellow she meets.

El. You refuse me? Know, then, to your confusion, Captain, that I have known who you are all the time. You forget. (Imitating hoarseness.) You have lost your cold!

Capt. C. Can it be possible? It must, it must—I see it all! I retract my foolish words.

El. And I retract my foolish words.

Capt. C. How, Ellen?

El. My name, sir, is Miss Marsden. I assumed the tone I did to punish you for an unworthy trick. But now, sir, all is at an end, and this time I really have done with you for ever.

Capt. C. Have some compassion for one whose only fault was caused by excess of love for you. Remember your own words—"An offence one would think most pardonable in a woman's sight."

El. They were words, of course.

Capt. C. Again: "She is wrong, headstrong, foolish, and she will suffer for it more than you will."

El. (Confused for a moment, then recovering herself.) That was impulse. Leave me, sir; the lameness of your person is transferred to your excuses.

Capt. C. (Astonished.) Lameness—my lameness!

El. Yes, sir; are you not ashamed of having endeavoured to work upon my feelings by pretending that you had but one eye and one arm?

Capt. C. I but one eye and one arm?

El. That you were lame, humpbacked, and had red hair?

Capt. C. Amazement! As I live, I thought that you had but one eye and one arm.

El. How?

Capt. C. And that you were lame, humpbacked, and had red hair!

El. Monster! I but one eye and one arm—I?

Re-enter CLEMENTS, L. H. 1 E.

Clem. (L. H.) Come, come, my assistance is wanted here. I plead guilty to this eye charge; the one-eye story is the one I told.

El. } You, sir?
Capt. C. }

Clem. Yes; I deceived you both. I wanted you to see each other before you married; I have succeeded, and now—

El. (R. H., interrupting him.) And now I won't have him!

Capt. C. (C.) Nay, Ellen; you offered to marry Captain Willoughby.

El. An additional reason why I cannot marry Captain Courtney.

Capt. C. I'm a man of an ardent temperament. I'll change my name to Willoughby.

El. You will? Then I'll be yours. I have said it. I'm a creature of impulse; there, take my hand while you can get it!

(He seizes her hand, kisses it, and they retire up the stage.)

Clem. Victory—victory! Verdict for the plaintiff! Damages—ahem!—to be settled hereafter.

Enter VELLUM, followed by PRUDENCE, 1 E. R. H., and O'FLINN, 1 E. L. H.

Vel. (R. H. C.) If you please, sir—

Pru. (R. H.) If ye please, sir—

O'F. (L. H.) If you please, sir—

Clem. (L. C.) Heyday! What does all this mean? Speak one at a time. What say you, Vellum?

Vel. If you please, sir, I wish to be married, and I have made Prudence a tender.

Clem. A legal one, I hope.

Vel. Oh, yes, sir.

Clem. What say you, Prudence? You have often advised this young man not to marry.

Pru. Eh, sir, it is quite true that I have counselled him against marriage generally, but I see nae objection to his marrying—with Prudence.

(Courtesying.)

Clem. Good. He is faithful, diligent, and attentive. I give my consent.

O'F. I forbid the banns!

Clem. Upon what ground?

O'F. I don't like it.

Clem. Demurrer overruled. Any other reason?

O'F. That's the strongest.

Clem. Then they shall be married!

Vel. (Jumping up and clapping his hands.) Huzza, huzza!

O'F. Get out, you little parchment pea, you! What do you keep jumping about that way for?

Pru. Never ye mind, so long as he jumps to purpose.

O'F. Why, then, if I'd such a brogue as that, I'd be ashamed to open my mouth!

El. (Coming down, C.) How is this? Another marriage?

Clem. Yes; my clerk and my housekeeper are going to follow your example. I have every reason to be satisfied with them both. Vellum, I increase your salary half a guinea a week.

Vel. Thank you, sir. (To Prudence, and raising himself on tiptoe.) I told you I should rise.

Clem. (To Prudence) You have played your part well, and I increase your wages five pounds a year.

Pru. Oh, sir, ye are o'er gude to me!

Capt. C. (Coming forward, R. C.) I must share my happiness with somebody. Be married on the same day we are, and I will give you fifty pounds for an outfit.

Pru. Oh, sir, it's really o'er muckle; I canna think o' tacking it!

El. And to show that I forgive you, I'll give you fifty more.

Pru. Really, ma'am, it's joost impossible. I canna thiuk o' ha'ing sae muckle; I canna accept it!

Clem. Poh, poh! You're too modest.

Pru. Nay, I've no a particle o' modesty about me; but I've joost a sort of a conscience.

O'F. (To Clements.) I beg your pardon, but as the money seems lying about, would there be any objection to me picking up some of it?

Clem. You're an impudent dog. What have you done, pray?

O'F. That's exactly what I want to know, sir. What have I done that I'm to get nothing?

Clem. Leave the room, sir!

O'F. The treatment's not elegant, and I give yees all warning. (Going.)

El. (To O'Flinn.) Stay.

Clem. No, no; let him go. He'll be glad enough to remain to-morrow.

El. Shall we be allowed to be here ourselves to-morrow?

Clem. True. We must obtain leave. (Advancing.) Ladies and gentlemen—

Vel. (Interrupting.) Shall I save you the trouble, sir? Ladies and gentlemen—

O'F. (Interrupting.) Hould your barking, you puppy! Ladies and gentlemen—

Pru. (Interrupting.) Ye're rude, sir—ye're vary rude. Ladies and gentlemen—

Capt. C. (Interrupting.) I'm a man of an ardent temperament. Ladies and gentlemen—

El. (Interrupting.) Stay. I'm a creature of impulse. Ladies and gentlemen, may I hope that there will be no occasion for asking three times, but that your impulse will be to let the marriages of this evening proceed—(courtesying)—under your special licence.

CURTAIN.

Disposition of the Characters at the Fall of the Curtain.

VELLUM. PRUDENCE. COURTNEY. ELLEN. CLEMENTS. O'FLINN

R.

L.

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